Newsletter of Deccan Birders (formerly Birdwatchers' Society of Andhra Pradesh)
New Series Volume 17 Number 4 April 2020 (Special Issue)

Editor's note

Some of our members had been to Australia for a ten-day-long birding trip from November 16th to 24th, 2019. In this Special Issue of the Pitta, we are happy to bring you an account of the trip, along with a number of colourful photographs. We hope you will find this Special Issue interesting.

AUSTRALIA – THE OTHER CONTINENT

Dr Barnali Chaudhuri

Sydney Opera House (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Travel is the only thing you can buy that makes you richer! It is this that drives me to travel as often as I can, and so, when the opportunity unfolded to visit Australia, I was very excited.

Australia is the smallest of the six continents and the entire continent is one country. As a result, a very strange array of endemic flora and fauna have developed over millions of years. I was full of anticipation at what we would see on the trip.

Noisy Miner
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Of the 22 Deccan Birders who had signed up for the trip, 17 of us reached Rajiv Gandhi International Airport, Hyderabad, by 8:30PM on November 14, 2019. The rest were to join us directly at Australia. Our flight took off at 12:15AM the next day and, after a brief stop-over at Kuala Lumpur, we reached Sydney just after 9:00PM. By the time we reached Travelodge, Sydney by shuttle, it was around 12:30AM on November 16.

November 16, 2019: Blue Mountains: Jenolan Caves, Three Sisters

The plan for the first two days, in Sydney, was for members of the group to independently go around for sight-seeing and cover any locations that they were keen to see. Accordingly, Jayati and I decided to do some exploring, and started off to the Blue Mountains. As we left our hotel, we were welcomed by several Noisy Miners.

The Blue Mountains lie to the west of Sydney in New South Wales, with a lot of steep cliffs, eucalyptus forests and caves. The forests of eucalyptus, popularly known as gum trees, discharge eucalyptus oil from their leaves which combines with air and dust particles to form a mist. The mist refracts, mainly, blue light – this makes the whole area look blue from a distance, and hence the name.

We walked to Mascot Station and took a train to Katoomba town, at the edge of Blue Mountains. I enjoyed the train ride and the scenic views thoroughly: the quiet, serene and rustic village life, a stark contrast to the cacophony of the high-rise buildings of Sydney. We reached Katoomba in three hours. While waiting for the bus to Jenolan Caves, a UNESCO World Heritage site near Katoomba station, we saw the beautiful Sulphur-crested Cockatoos calling with their shrill voices.

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Jenolan Caves are 340 million years old - the world's oldest known open caves as declared by the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organization (CSIRO). Amongst over 300 caves that exist, only 8 caves – Lucas, Imperial, Chifley, Orient, River, Ribbon, Diamond and Jubilee – are open to the public. We opted to see Lucas Cave, one of the most popular caves. We had about one and half hours before the guided tour began, and decided to make use of the time to get in some birding.

First, we went towards the cave house. A male Superb Fairywren was dancing near the mountain lodge. After a while, three more joined, along with one female. Butterflies were also enjoying nectar from flowers. Somebody pointed out a Superb Lyrebird that was walking around nearby.

Superb Lyrebird (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Pied Currawong
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Superb Fairywren
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Then the time came to explore the other side of the Grand Arch of Jenolan Caves. We started walking towards the dam wall on the River Walk, which was constructed in 1908 to create the Jenolan Lake, known locally as Blue Lake. The blue colour of the lake is an illusion caused by the reflection of light through the dissolved particles of limestone. The Blue Lake is famous for its unusual colour and for a resident Platypus.

Grand Arch of Jenolan Caves
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Tree-fern (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

The reflection of Soft Tree-ferns on the blue water, creating a perfect inverted photographic image, was beautiful. The pine fruit looked like green-coloured eggs.

Pine Fruit (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Eastern Water Dragon (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We were not fortunate enough to see the Platypus, but I was excited at seeing an Eastern Water Dragon for the first time.

New Holland and Crescent Honeyeaters were busy drinking honey from flowers. River She-oak (*Casuarina cunninghamiana*) and River Gum trees (*Eucalyptus bicostata*) were seen covering the circumference of the lake.

New Holland Honeyeater (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crescent Honeyeater
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

There were also a number of interesting trees and plants there, as well as butterflies and moths.

Broad-leaved Drumstick
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Mountain Devil
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Soft Tree-fern
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Bunya Pine (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Japanese Dogwood
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Spidery Tea Tree
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Yellow Admiral
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Anthelidae sp Moth
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Lucas Cave (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Unfortunately, due to our time constraint, we had to leave this beautiful spot and return to join the Lucas Cave tour.

The guided tour started with a group of about 40 people. The guide articulated the features of this striking limestone formation of stalagmite which is an upward-growing mound of mineral deposits that have precipitated from water dripping onto the floor of a cave. A stalactite hangs like an icicle from the ceiling or sides of a cavern. The deposits consist of calcite (calcium carbonate). As we went through the stairs, a spacious cavern led us to the heart of the mountain. I got the opportunity to see several limestone caves. Surprisingly each one was uniquely gorgeous.

Our guide narrated the story of the sages who used these caves once upon a time. I marveled at the grandeur of a particular stalactite, which looked like a huge curtain. Stalagmites rising from the bottom and stalactites coming in from the top met with each other to form pillars. We entered the Cathedral inside the cave, an arching chamber often used for concerts, where our guide played recorded music just to give us a flavour of the experience. Lastly there was a light show, when the cave glowed in different hues, as if in a dream.

On our way to Katoomba, we were excited to see a Kangaroo, with its Joey (young one) peeping out from its sack. Later, though, when we learnt the difference between Kangaroos and Wallabies, I realized that it was not a Kangaroo but a Wallaby!

Red-necked Wallaby (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

The bus driver dropped us off at Echo Point, Katoomba. We enjoyed the view of the Three Sisters from the clifftop viewing platform. The Three Sisters were formed by land erosion – the sandstone from the Blue Mountains was eroded over time by wind, rain and rivers, causing the cliffs surrounding Jamison Valley to be slowly broken up.

Echo Point, Three Sisters, Blue Mountains (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

But there is an interesting Aboriginal story about three sisters named Meehni, Wimlah and Gunnedoo, who lived in Jamison Valley as members of the Katoomba tribe. They fell in love with three men from their neighboring Nepean tribe, but marriage was forbidden by tribal law. The brothers were not willing to accept this and decided to abduct the three sisters, thus causing a major tribal battle. The sisters were turned into stones by an elder to protect them, but as he himself was then killed in the fighting, there was no one to turn them back to life. I found the story very interesting.

Pacific Black Duck (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

After enjoying exploring the Three Sisters, along with the surroundings, thoroughly, we came back to Katoomba by city bus, then boarded a train to Mascot and reached Travelodge by 10:30PM.

Writer's Walk (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

November 17, 2019: Sydney Bridge, Sydney Opera & Royal Botanic Garden of Sydney

Jayati and I boarded the train from Mascot and got down at Quay station. NSW Ministry for the Arts has engraved famous quotations of many legendary writers like James A Michener, Germaine Greer etc. on Writers Walk – a unique way to pay homage.

As we walked down Writers' Walk, we saw many Silver Gulls also walking around freely, and several small ships were sailing near the Sydney Bridge. Just beside the Bridge, Sydney Opera House stood tall. I had earlier seen these in pictures only, and I was amazed to see both in front of me side by side.

Silver Gull (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We first went to explore the huge 74-acre Royal Botanic Garden of Sydney, near the Opera House. We saw many interesting and beautiful trees and plants there: Wollemia Pine (*Wollemia nobilis*), one of the world's rarest plants; Narrow-leaved (aka Queensland) Bottle Tree, so unique, and aptly named for its shape; Golden Wattle (*Acasia pycnantha*), the national flower of Australia; Purple Flag flower (*Patersonia occidentalist*); Spiral Ginger (*Costus barbatus*) with red inflorescence and bright yellow tubular flowers, native to Costa Rica; Kangaroo Paw (*Anigozanthos manglesii*) flowers; a yellow flower cluster on an *Aeonium arboreum* succulent; Water Lily (*Nymphaeaceae sp*); Peace Lily (*Spathiphyllum wallisii*); Bromeliad, a tropical rain forest flower; Kaffir Lily (*Clivia miniata*); and Green Shell Ginger (*Alpinia zerumbet*) flowers.

Narrow-leaved (aka Queensland) Bottle Tree
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Golden Wattle
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Purple Flag Flower
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Spiral Ginger
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Tree Aeonium (aka Tree Houseleek)
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Water Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Asiatic Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Kangaroo Paw (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Pride of Madeira (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Day Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Peace Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Kaffir Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Green Shell Ginger (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Honey Bees feasting on Southern Magnolia
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Bromeliad (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rainbow Lorikeet (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Masked Lapwing (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

The colorful Rainbow Lorikeet on Banksia flowers was stunningly beautiful. We also came across several other birds like Kookaburra, Dusky Moorhen, Masked Lapwing, Australian White Ibis, Noisy Miner, Pacific Black Duck, Australian Wood Ducks, etc. All the birds seemed very comfortable with people.

Kookaburra
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Black Swan (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Pacific Black Duck
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Australian Wood Duck Male (L) & Female (R) (Photos: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Australian White Ibis (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Noisy Miner (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

We then moved on to the Sydney Opera House, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and a masterpiece of 20th century architecture. The roofs of the Sydney Opera House, consisting of a series of large precast concrete 'shells' each composed of sections of a sphere, are set on a podium of monumental size. Jørn Utzon, the Danish architect, designed the Opera House in 1957. It won an international design competition and was opened in October 1973. The Sydney Opera House is a multi-venue performing arts centre. Utzon designed it with inspiration from bird wings as well as the shape and form of clouds and shells.

Sydney Opera House Shell (L) and Key (R) (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Inside Sydney Opera House Concert Hall
(Photo: Surekha Aitabathula)

We took a guided tour inside the Opera House. We were lucky enough to see a concert rehearsal, which was to be presented that afternoon. I marvelled at and saluted the technology used to create the Sydney Opera House. No microphone was required. The design of the shells absorbed the sound without forming any echo. Glass rings were hanging from the roof-top of the concert hall to make sure that the feedback sound reaches to the artist only. The grand organ inside the Concert Hall was amazing. It is the largest mechanical tracker action organ in the world with over 10,000 pipes. The technology used to construct the Sydney Opera House is simply mind-blowing.

Sydney Harbour Bridge (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

The Sydney Harbour Bridge is a heritage-listed steel arch bridge that carries rail, vehicle, bicycle and pedestrian traffic. The view of the Bridge, the Harbour, and the nearby Sydney Opera House is widely regarded as an iconic image of Australia. The Bridge is nicknamed 'Coathanger' after its arch design. It connects Sydney Central Business District and North Shore. The flag of Australia was flying high over the Bridge.

We then wound up for the day, returned to Travelodge and got ready for our flight to Melbourne, scheduled for 6:00PM. We landed at Melbourne just after 8:00PM and arrived at Hotel Urban Central around 9:45PM, all charged up for the next day, when our 'real' birding tour was to begin.

November 18, 2019: Western Treatment Plant (WTP)

Our expedition began with the Western Treatment Plant (WTP) located in Werribee. WTP is one of the most popular and internationally recognized wildlife and bird habitats for bird watching in Victoria. After breakfast at Hotel Urban Central, we piled into two vehicles, led by Martin and Janine (our tour guides). They had already arranged our permit and access key for bird watching in WTP. We started our journey around 8:00AM and soon, the tall buildings of Melbourne were replaced by meadows and ponds, with some mountains in the distance.

Eucalyptus forest
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We stopped at one point on the roadside for birding – a Nankeen Kestrel was planning its next move sitting on a wire; White-faced Cows were grazing in a nearby field; some ducks swam around in the pond; Pied Stilts were in a hunting mood, and a Nankeen Night Heron was resting on a tree trunk.

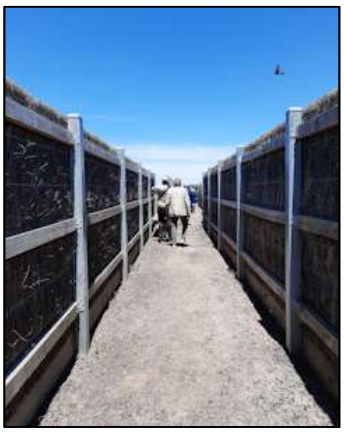
White-faced Cow, Grey Teal (extreme left), Pacific Black Duck, Chestnut Teal
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Pied Stilt (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Nankeen Night Heron
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Soon, we reached our destination. I listened in amazement as Janine explained how WTP works. She told us that WTP treats half of Melbourne's sewage using a series of large ponds, called lagoons. Sewage flows slowly through anaerobic and aerobic lagoons, gradually becoming cleaner as bacteria breaks down the organic material in the water. The leftover solids are dried and stored in large piles and reused as biosolids. The whole process uses very little energy and produces Class C water in 30 to 35 days. WTP can also produces Class A water, the highest standard of recycled water. The production of biogas (or sewage gas) enables the WTP to be energy self-sufficient. There are times when the water is too clean, hence depriving its flora and fauna of the essential nutrients required for thriving. So WTP always monitors the nutrient levels of ponds so that these birds can stay healthy. WTP is internationally important (as per Ramsar convention) for the conservation of the remaining wetlands through proper use and management. After the lesson was over around 12:30PM, we finished our lunch and got ready to start birding. We started walking towards Lake Borrie through a bird hide.

Lake Borrie, part of WTP (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)



En route to the bird hide
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

The hide (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Inside the hide
(Photo courtesy: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

This was the first time I had ever seen a bird hide; I thought it was an excellent idea – birds would not be disturbed by human presence. A page in the world of WTP was unfolding in front of our eyes.

We saw Great Egrets, Purple Swamphen, Great Crested Grebe, a flock of Straw-necked Ibises in flight, Australian Pied Oystercatchers, a flock of Grey Teals swimming, Welcome Swallows sitting around, Australian Pelicans, Yellow-billed Spoonbills, Royal Spoonbills, Whiskered Terns, etc – and a Black-fronted Dotterel!

The most spectacular sight was one of innumerable Black Swans with their vibrant red beaks. WTP is really a birding paradise!

Welcome Swallow (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

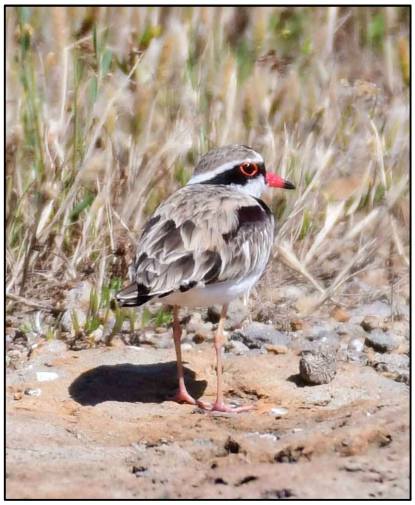
Straw-necked Ibis (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Australian Pelican (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Great Crested Grebe (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Whiskered Tern flock (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Whiskered Tern (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)



Black-fronted Dotterel
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Royal Spoonbill
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Purple Swamphen
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Red-necked Avocets were busy feeding in formation. Dusky Moorhens and Pied Stilts crossed from one lagoon to another.

Red-necked Avocet (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Dusky Moorhen with young (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

We enjoyed watching a flying Australasian Gannet far from the shore through our binoculars. However, we were also saddened to see a dead Gannet on the seashore entangled in fishing wires – a reminder of the stark reality of modern fishing practices that endanger our beloved birds on a daily basis.

Australasian Gannet entangled in fishing wire
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We also came across an Australasian Pipit on a pole. The guide stopped our vehicle to show us the Fairy Martin's nests. He informed us that Sparrows break the Martin's nests to reside there; we also noticed some sparrows as they broke some nests to build their own. We saw a Swamp Harrier flying, and some Crested Pigeons were roosting on a tree.

Fairy Martin (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Black Kite (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Golden-headed Cisticola (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

European Hare (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

We then went back to the Hotel Urban Central to freshen up. Geetanjali, Shilka, Mr Chaudhary, Jayati and I further explored Melbourne on foot. The Crown, a famous hotel and casino in Melbourne, was our landmark. We roamed on the bank of the Yarra River where, at Melbourne Heliport, we spotted a red chopper fitted with fire-fighting equipment to combat forest fires. Gulls were out and about, trying to snatch our food. I was stunned to see a cycle-rickshaw puller carrying passengers.

Helicopter fitted with fire-fighting equipment
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Rickshaw in operation (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Then we returned to Urban Central and, after an early dinner, went to St Kilda pier by bus to see the Little Penguins. The sunset painted the sky in beautiful strokes of red, yellow and purple, signaling the Penguins at St Kilda pier to come in from the sea. Little Penguins are the smallest of the penguins (an average of 33 cm in height and 43 cm in length). They have modified wings called flippers that they use for swimming in the ocean. They were so cute and adorable. It was a fantastic experience to watch them even in the midst of biting cold. The Penguins were amazingly visitor friendly. One of them walked right in front of us and jumped into its burrow between the rocks.

Beach near St Kilda Pier (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Little Penguin (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

November 19, 2019: You Yangs Regional Park

We started off early in the morning, with two vehicles led by Martin and Janine. We were very excited as we were about to see an Aboriginal cultural landscape in You Yangs Regional Park. While going towards our destination, two Straw-necked Ibises opened our birding log for the day. A flock of Little Corellas were sitting on the roof of a house. House Sparrows were busy executing their morning routine. Long-billed Corellas were happily chirping at each other; Crested Pigeons and Rainbow Lorikeets were resting.

Straw-necked Ibis (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

En route to You Yangs Regional Park
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Little Corella (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Long-billed Corella (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We reached You Yangs Regional Park around 9:00AM. Before we entered the forest of tall eucalyptus trees, Martin cautioned us about the Red Bull Ant – the largest ant in Australia, also known as Giant Bull Ant. Its sting contains some of the most toxic venoms in the insect world. Australian Magpies were as abundant as our Crows back home. A Grey Fantail sat on top of its nest, looking like the lid on top of a cup. A White-faced Heron was sitting on a boulder as if he were looking through a mirror. True reflections of the trees on the pond were amazing.

Red Bull Ant
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Australian Magpie
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

White-faced Heron (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Fresh Kangaroo pugmarks showed that the Kangaroos had come there earlier to drink water. Janine spotted a Shingleback Skink *(Tiliqua rugosa*) which was moving slowly just in front of us, perfectly camouflaged in the surroundings. Its tail looked like a second mouth. We later saw another one while returning towards our lunch venue.

Suddenly, Martin stopped our vehicle. An Eastern Brown Snake was crossing the road. We got down from our vehicle to get a better look at it – the Snake was well camouflaged in the surroundings. Martin told that it is native to Australia and highly venomous. Within 10 minutes another one crossed the road!

Shingleback Skink (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Eastern Brown Snake (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

We saw a Crow with eyes like red buttons, hence aptly named the Red-eyed Crow – also known as the White-winged Chough – and a Rufous Whistler. A Koala was seated high on a Gum tree, busily scratching itself, a pair of Tawny Frogmouths sat silently on a tree branch, and a Common Bronzewing gave good views. We thoroughly enjoyed our birding at You Yangs Regional Park.

White-winged Chough
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Rufous Whistler (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Koala
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Tawny Frogmouth (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Common Bronzewing (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Janine was ready with our lunch around 1:00PM. Soon after, we geared up for our 2nd half of the day's birding. We saw an Australian Bustard and a Cape Barren Goose walking in their signature majestic styles. Janine showed us a Spotted Pardalote nest in the ground, which looked like a small burrow. Later on, we also saw the beautiful bird.

Janine with our lunch (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Cape Barren Goose (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

We then proceeded towards a bird hide to observe water birds.

Blue-billed Ducks, Grey & Chestnut Teals, and some Dusky Moorhens and Pied Stilts were happily traipsing around in the water. Cape Barren Geese were swimming in a line.

Chestnut Teal (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Dusky Moorhen (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Eastern Long-necked Turtle (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Cape Barren Goose (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

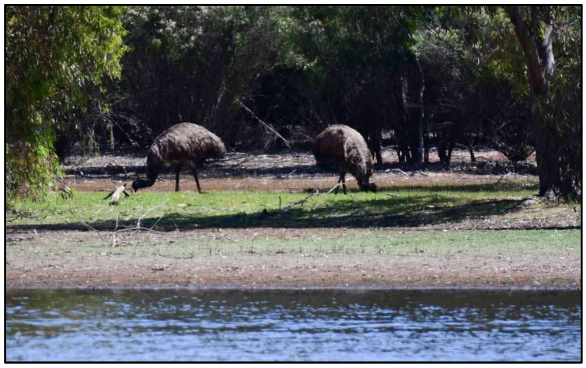
Janine pointed out the Eastern Long-necked Turtle. Three of them were in a race on an inclined tree trunk in water. She explained that it is a side-necked Turtle that bends its head sideways into its shell rather than pulling it back. Their necks were pretty long and yellow on the underside.

We then left the bird hide and entered a forest. Janine took a leaf from a bushy tree and asked us to check its flavour. I thought it was a Bottlebrush Tree as the flower resembled a bottle brush, but Janine told us that the tree was called the Tea Tree (*Melaleuca alternifolia*). I could not see any similarity between this and the actual tea bushes which we Indians are all too familiar with. Janine explained that the name Tea Tree originated as the Aboriginal people used to make an infusion to drink in place of tea. Tea Tree Oil is derived from the leaves of the Tea Tree and possesses antibacterial, anti-inflammatory, antiviral and antifungal properties.

We came across both male and female Red-rumped Parrots, New Holland Honeyeaters, Scarlet Robin, Superb Fairywren, Common Starling, Red Wattlebird and many other species. Two Emus were feeding far away.

Tea Tree (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Superb Fairywren (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)



Emu (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Red Wattlebird
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Red-rumped Parrot Male (L) & Female (R) (Photos: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

After seeing a herd of Kangaroos, I learnt the difference between a Kangaroo and a Wallaby – Kangaroos are much bigger and brown in colour, whereas Wallabies are smaller and have a reddish hue.

Martin explained that once a Kangaroo stands straight up – a position indicating a sense of threat – the entire herd runs away immediately. We also observed the same.

We followed Martin to see an abandoned Emu nest in the ground with four left-over eggs (around 13cm long and 9cm wide). Martin explained that the female lays the eggs but abandons them immediately in the pursuit of other potential mates. The male not only incubates the eggs, but also nurtures the babies. With Martin's permission, I held one of the eggs in my hand.

Kangaroo with Joey
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Abandoned Emu eggs (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Eastern Blue-tongued Skink (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

All of us then returned to the hotel. After freshening up Geetanjali, Shalini, Jayati and I went to explore Melbourne city and walked up Flinders St and Elizabeth station. I was astonished to see that it is legal to sell the skins of Kangaroo, Wallaby or Common Brushtail Possum in Australia.

Shop selling skins (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Aboriginal art (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crown, the casino, looked like a dream house on the banks of the Yarra River. People were enjoying themselves outside the Crown – it was a vibrant scene. Soon it was time to go back to our hotel, Urban Central. We went to sleep that night, anticipating an exciting next day at Raymond Island.

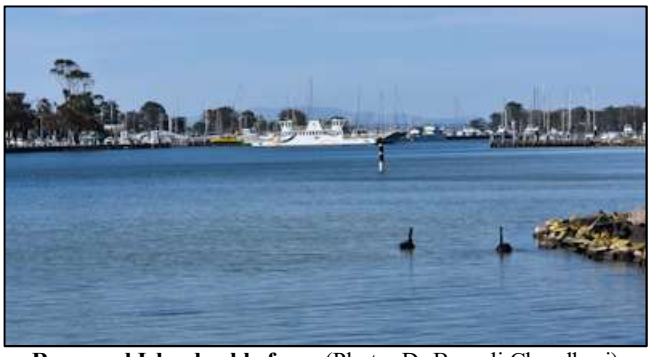
November 20, 2019: Raymond Island

We started early from Melbourne, as we had to travel about 300 kilometers to reach Raymond Island, and saw the Nankeen Kestrel and Brown Falcon while *en route*.

Landscape near Bengworden (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Nankeen Kestrel (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

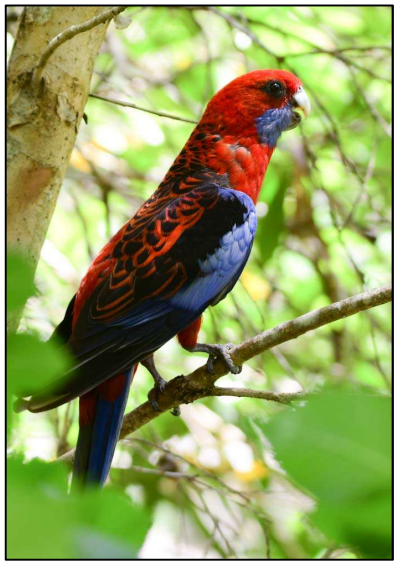
We reached Raymond Island Ferry around 12:30PM. Raymond Island is situated in the Gippsland Lakes in eastern Victoria and is famous for Koala spotting. The ferry provides the only link between the island and the mainland. Both vehicles, along with us, boarded the chain or cable ferry from Paynesville, and within no time, reached Raymond Island.



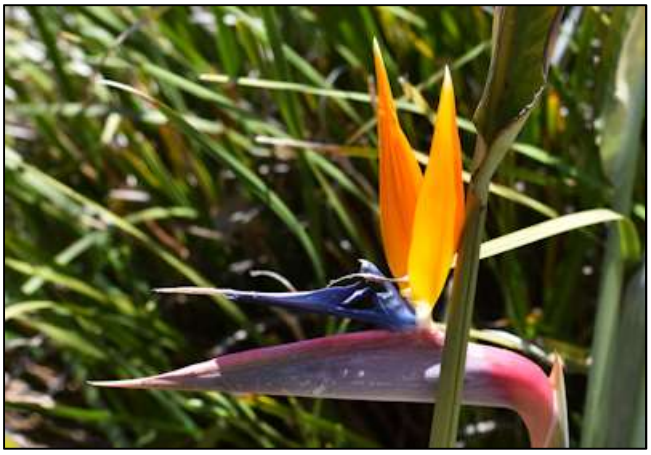
Raymond Island cable ferry (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Koala (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

A spectacular Crimson Rosella welcomed us to Raymond Island. Two Koalas were sitting comfortably on a gum tree. They were so adorable and looked just like soft toys. We learnt that Koalas generally don't drink water as they get all the moisture they need from the leaves of eucalyptus trees which they eat.



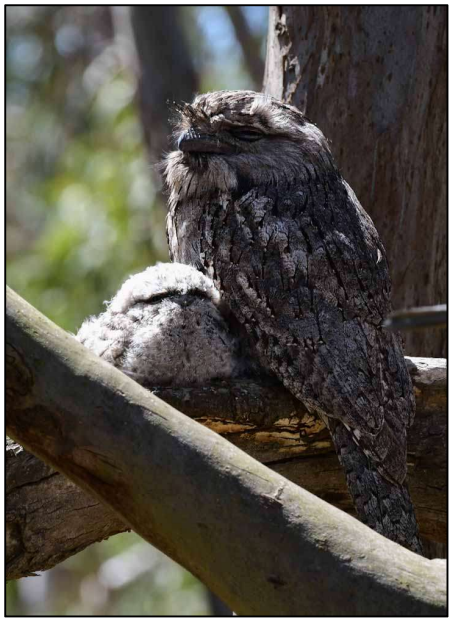
Crimson Rosella
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)



Bird of Paradise (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We enjoyed the scenic beauty while having our picnic lunch. Galahs were busily going about their routine. We saw lots of Kangaroos in the Kangaroo Park. We went for a nature walk along the trail road where Sagarika spotted a family of Tawny Frogmouths. Janine informed us that the father was babysitting while the mother was taking rest on a nearby branch.

Galah (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)



Tawny Frogmouth
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Janine showed us the Short-beaked Echidna, earlier called the Spiny Anteater, foraging for ants and termites. It has sharp spines like the Porcupine, a beak like a bird, a pouch like a Kangaroo and it lays eggs like a reptile. Echidnas and the Platypus are the only living egg-laying mammals. Janine explained that the female lays a single soft-shelled egg directly into her pouch. The young Echidna, called a Puggle, takes milk from its mother. In around 45-55 days, when the baby starts developing spines, the mother ejects the baby out of its pouch into the burrow. She comes back every five days to nurse the baby, which is weaned at around seven months. I was surprised to see Noisy Miners attacking the Echidna.

Short-beaked Echidna (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

A Kookaburra posed for us for a long time, so much so that we could even take selfies with it! Black Swans, Australian Coots and some other ducks were swimming near the shore. Little Black, Great and Little Pied Cormorants, Greater Crested Terns and Silver Gulls were exhibiting their presence on wooden poles.

Black Swan (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Black Swan with young (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Kookaburra
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Sacred Kingfisher
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Australian Coot
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Little Black, Great and Little Pied Cormorants
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Greater Crested Tern (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Gippsland Lakes (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Soon it was time to say goodbye to Raymond Island. We returned to Paynesville by ferry at around 4:00PM, and headed towards Orbost, the Snowy River Country. Within an hour we reached our next destination, the Gippsland Lakes viewpoint. Gippsland Lakes are a network of around 420 sq km comprising several lakes, marshes and lagoons, fed by seven rivers and separated from the sea by sand dunes. Gippsland Lakes are linked to the sea by an artificial entrance to combat the floods of the rivers. They are protected by the Ramsar Convention of Wetlands of International Importance. We were lucky enough to see some of the Burrunan Dolphins (*Tursiops australis*) diving. The name Burrunan is Aboriginal and means 'large sea fish of the porpoise kind'. There were also lots of Native Pigface succulents with their beautiful daisy-like flowers.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Native Pigface (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Around 6:00PM, we reached Lake Tyers Beach, where people and wildlife share the coast. A vast area is covered with golden coarse sand. We saw an Australian Pied Oystercatcher and a flock of Whiskered Terns flying around.

We enjoyed the beach walk for about an hour. Then we had dinner and reached our hotel, the Country Roads Motor Inn at Orbost, around 9:30PM.

November 21, 2019: Orbost, Spring Creek Walk, Snowy River

After breakfast we started out. I was engrossed in the scenic beauty of the meadows. The white clouds sailing through the blue sky were beautiful. We stopped to see an Australasian Pipit that was sitting on a fence wire. While all were busy with birding, I noticed a beautiful fly resting on my trousers, and could not resist taking a photograph with my mobile. Later on, Janine informed that it was a Flower-feeding March Fly (*Scaptia auriflua*). She explained that it did not bite, unlike other March Flies. It strictly drinks nectar, and not blood.

Australasian Pipit (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Flower-feeding March Fly
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We saw a Pallid Cuckoo sitting on the road for a long time; I thought that it was hurt or sick. But after a while I was delighted to see it flying away to rest on a nearby tree. Nearby, a flock of Galahs was feasting in the meadow.

Pallid Cuckoo (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Galah flock (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Spring Creek Walk splits into two sections which meet at the Spring Creek Falls. We skipped the higher tree track and took the lower Kanooka track which criss-crossed the creek through the rainforest. Martin showed us an area where a Superb Lyrebird had scratched the ground. He explained that it spends most of its day searching among fallen leaves in search of insects and worms and, in the process, makes the soil ready for new life to grow. The Lyrebird mimics other bird calls and even sounds of human activity. Just then, we heard a sound like a Lyrebird scratching the ground and went after it; happily, we soon spotted the bird.

Martin leading the walk (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Superb Lyrebird (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Gippsland Water Dragon (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Swamp Wallaby (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

A Gippsland Water Dragon was sunning itself on a rock while another was climbing a tree trunk. A Swamp Wallaby was busy quenching its thirst. We sat on some rocks with the water flowing around us. It was pleasant observing many kinds of birds diving in and out of the water.

During our journey, we came across many birds – Rose Robin, Satin Bowerbird, Crested (or Australian) Shrike-tit, Leaden Flycatcher, Yellow-faced Honeyeater, Grey Fantail, White-naped Honeyeater, Spotted Pardalote, Shining Bronze Cuckoo and Australian King Parrot.

Rose Robin (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crested Shrike-tit (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Satin Bowerbird female
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Yellow-faced Honeyeater
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Leaden Flycatcher (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Shining Bronze Cuckoo
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Grey Fantail (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

White-naped Honeyeater (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Spotted Pardalote (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Australian King Parrot (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

After lunch at Spring Creek Picnic Ground, Martin showed us a beautiful Satin Bowerbird nest, so neatly decorated with blue items to attract a female.

Satin Bowerbird nest (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Azure Kingfisher (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Straw-necked Ibis with ducks
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Australasian Darter
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Australian Wood Ducks were swimming on a waterbody and an Azure Kingfisher was quietly sitting on a bare tree, waiting to catch a fish. A Straw-necked Ibis stood tall among several ducks. Little Cormorants were calling from a tree trunk. An Australasian Darter was sitting on a tree.

We reached the traditional land of the Krowathunkoolong clan of the mother tribe Gunai (Kurni). An interesting Aboriginal mythology about the origin of water was depicted on a nearby board. The story went like this: One day, a frog named Tiddalik, who woke up with an unquenchable thirst, drank up all the fresh water, and the animals and plants began to die due to lack of water. A wise old Owl told the animals that water could be released if the frog could be made to laugh. An eel managed to make the frog laugh by tying himself up into comical shapes. Many animals drowned in the resulting flood, but the Aborigines were saved by the Pelican (who was an Aborigine once) who made a giant canoe. All these myths show the intricate and strong link with Aboriginal people and animals.

Snowy River, near Orbost (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

The Snowy River Valley has sustained Aboriginal people and provided food, transport and social order for at least 40,000 years. Tree bark was used to make canoes, shields and shelter. These trees are called Scar Trees; we were happy to see one of them. In autumn, the trunk of the Black Wattle was deliberately notched. The resulting balls of gum were eaten or dissolved in water with flower nectar to make a sweet drink. The gum was also mixed with ashes of wood or mussel shells to form cement that sealed bark buckets to carry water. Hard wooden spears, clubs and digging sticks were made from the long straight stems of the Tea Tree (*Melaleuca Species*). The soft papery barks of larger trees were used to wrap babies. Kangaroo grass and other barks were used to make fishing nets. Tea Tree bark was used for floating and stones were used for sinking the fishing nets. The river was fished. Forest animals such as Possum, Kangaroo, Wallaby and Emu were hunted to complement their diet; the skins were also used by the people to wrap themselves in winter. Aboriginal people used everything from nature to lead a self-sufficient and peaceful life.

After a very interesting day, we returned and reached Orbost just before 7:00PM. We had dinner at the Orbost Club Inc and returned to our Inn.

November 22, 2019: Peter Savory & Simon Bommer Memorial Walk, West Cape, Grass Tree Field, Cabbage Tree Creek & Nocturnal Animal Walk

Peter Savory & Simon Bommer Memorial Walk
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Moonlight Grevillea
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We started our journey by the Snowy River side road. There was a good amount of the beautiful Grevillea Moonlight along the way. A Swamp Harrier and a Pacific Harrier seemed to accompany us as the landscape changed from river to meadow. Within ten minutes the landscape again changed to lakes, separated from the Southern Ocean by some sand dunes. We came across Great Egrets, Royal Spoonbills, Sharp-tailed Sandpipers, Whiskered Terns, etc.

Royal Spoonbill (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Sharp-tailed Sandpiper (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

By 8:00AM we reached Peter Savory & Simon Bommer Memorial Walk. Walking through a bridge, we reached a fish nursery. The quiet brackish water of the Snowy River Estuary is a perfect habitat for many species of fish and other aquatic animals. Janine spotted a Southern Emu-wren for us. She explained that Emu-wrens are so named because of their six wispy, Emu-like feathers.

Along the way, we also saw the White-necked Heron, Australian White-eye, Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo and Musk Lorikeet.

Southern Emu-wren (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Musk Lorikeet (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

White-necked Heron
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Australian White-eye
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

We climbed on a sand dune that separated the lakes from the ocean. We were surprised to see the vast Southern Ocean in front of our eyes. Wave after wave struck the sand beach. After enjoying the ocean view for a while, we went towards Cape Conran. A Red-necked Wallaby was sitting alertly at the corner of the road, as if she was the security guard.

Lakes separated from Southern Ocean by sand dunes (Photos: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We then drove to West Cape near Cape Conran and started walking towards a very rocky beach. This place is considered a death trap, as the rocky beach extends into the sea and ships often run aground if they venture too close. As we were moving through the beach, the rock structures became strikingly different from one side to the other – from yellow rocks to blackish ones. Some rocks were covered with beautiful green algae.

Cape Conran (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rocky Beach (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

I was amazed to see lots of different sea shells in the beach. I collected a few of them. Among them were the Broad-ribbed Limpets (*Patelloida saccharina*) that looked like small caps clinging tightly to the rocks.

Broad-ribbed Limpet (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Brown Kelp (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Different types of seaweed were lying on the beach. Great and Little Pied Cormorants were sunbathing on the rocks. Pacific Gulls were happily swimming in the ocean. Australian Pied Oystercatchers were racing with each other.

A large Brown Kelp (seaweed) was found on the sea shore. I was astonished to know that kelp is full of good nutrients and a natural source of vitamins, minerals and antioxidants. There was some seaweed known as Neptune's Necklace (*Homosira banksil*) lying on the beach as well.

Australian Pied Oystercatcher (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Neptune's Necklace (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Nature is truly amazing. I was immersed in the rough and rocky landscape of the beach with the serene blue color of the sea. While there, we took some group photographs at Salmon Rocks Beach.

We came across the White-browed Woodswallow, Echidna and a Bull Ant with its prey. Common Fringe Lilies (*Thysanotus tuberosus*) and some Ferns were spectacular.

Bull Ant with prey (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Common Fringe Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

At the Grass Tree field (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Giant Fern (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Martin stopped our car to show us Grass Tree (*Xanthorrhoea*) flowers on a spear-like spike around 3 to 4m long. We tasted the nectar of the Grass Tree flowers. The flowers were arranged in a spiral up the spike, producing nectar and attracting various birds, insects and mammals.

Martin informed us that a bush fire stimulates the flowering of the Grass Tree. The fire burns the leaves and blackens the trunk, but the tree survives as the dead leaves around the stem serve as insulation against the heat of the wildfire.

After a good lunch at the General Store, we went to see Cabbage Tree Creek. Cabbage Tree Palms (*Livistona australis*) have straight trunks with shining crowns reaching beyond the canopy and towering overhead. We saw Brown Gerygone, Black-faced Monarch, Grey and Rufous Fantails.

Brown Gerygone
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Black-faced Monarch
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rufous Fantail (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We heard some whipping noises in the middle of the forest which, as Martin educated us, was the call of a male Eastern Whipbird.

Martin dropped us around 3:45PM for some shopping near the Orbost Clock Tower, a short walking distance from our Inn. So after shopping, we returned to our rooms and freshened up for the evening tour to see some nocturnal animals.

After an early dinner at Marlo Hotel, we piled into two cars and headed towards a forest area. The sun was just setting.

We walked along the forest trail while looking for the Common Wombat and the Common Brushtail Possum. A Red-necked Wallaby popped up its head as we passed. Its eyes were glowing in the red light thrown by Martin. Next to it, Martin pointed out a Common Brushtail Possum on a gum tree trunk, eating its leaves. Its black and brush-like tail was hanging from the tree, justifying its name.

Common Brushtail Possum (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

The Common Brushtail Possum is a tree-climbing nocturnal marsupial (a mammal that has a pouch). The baby Possum, like its cousins, the Kangaroo and the Wallaby, is called Joey. Unfortunately, we did not spot a Wombat, though we saw its burrow.

Common Wombat burrow
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Long-legged Fly
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

November 23, 2019: Marsdenia Rainforest Walk, Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place, Mitchel River

The majority of Australia's trees are hardwoods, with a predominance of eucalyptus trees. There are more than 700 species of eucalyptus and most of them are native to Australia. They are commonly known as Gum Trees because they exude copious *kino* (gum) from any break in the bark.

As we walked through the Marsdenia Rainforest Walk, I was astonished to see the gigantic Gum Trees kissing the sky.

Marsdenia Rainforest Walk (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Gum Tree
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

I found it extremely difficult to spot the Striated Thornbill (*Acanthiza lineata*), endemic to Australia, because of its very small size. But at last, I succeeded, not only in spotting it, but also in capturing it in my camera.

Striated Thornbill (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crested Pigeon (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Long-billed Corella feeding (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Common Starling (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crested Pigeons and Long-billed Corellas were sitting on tree trunks while the Common Starlings, Black-headed Ibis, Australian Magpie and Magpie-larks were in the field.

Australian Magpie (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Magpie-lark (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

It was easy to differentiate between Australian Magpie and Magpie-lark – the Magpie-lark is a little smaller than the Magpie and has a slender bill that is all white, whereas the Magpie's bill is pale with black tips, heavier and triangular. The colours of the upperparts and underparts are also interchanged.

Gippsland Lakes (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Little Pied Cormorant
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

After visiting the mouth of Gippsland lakes, we went to Krowathunkooloong Keeping Place. It is a heritage museum dedicated to preserving and showcasing Aboriginal culture. It is located in Bairnsdale near St. Mary's Catholic Church. It is named after Krowathunkooloong tribe that occupied the Orbost and Snowy River area.

We entered East Gippsland Art Gallery inside Krowathunkooloong. The place was filled with beautiful Aboriginal art canvases. We went inside the museum with our guide. He explained that the Gunaikurnai people are the traditional owners of Gippsland, having five major clans: Brabralung, Bratualung, Brayakaulung, Krowathunkooloong, and Tatungalung. We learnt a little about their history, heritage and culture. Red and yellow were colors used in festivals while white was used as a sign of peace and respect to the old and deceased. Gum Tree bark was used to make canoes, shields and shelter. The shapes of hand palms were scarred on tree stems as a symbol of respect to the elderly. These trees are called Scar Trees. Some trees are carved or decorated also. The scars exposed the sapwood of the trunk or branch.

There is no written script in the Aboriginal language, but they use symbols. Aboriginal people are not supposed to speak in their language outside their premises. Our guide showed us a Possum skin blanket where the other side was totally stitched with symbols. How one wore the blanket could mean different things depending on the direction of symbols.

Martin told us an interesting story of the creators of Gunaikurnai. Borun the Pelican, the first Gunaikurnai, came down from the mountains in Victoria's northwest, alone and carrying a bark canoe on his head. He crossed the river and continued his journey. During his journey he heard a constant tapping sound but could not figure out its source. Finally, he reached the deep water of the inlet and put his canoe down. To his surprise, he saw a woman sitting in it. She was Tuk, the Musk Duck. They got married and became the parents of the five clans, the creators of Gunaikurnai. Very interesting!

We saw some Boomerangs, which are wooden Aboriginal throwing devices. The name is said to have its origin in the word *'wo-mur-rang'*, which was a spear-throwing device. It served as an extension of the human arm, enabling a spear to travel at a greater speed and force than is possible with only the arm. The guide explained about the Boomerangs. They were used to hunt in many different ways. Some Boomerangs used by Aboriginal hunters could get close to birds high in the sky where it might circle multiple times before it hit the target. A returning Boomerang is designed to return to the thrower. However, if it hits something, it will affect its flight path and the boomerang will not come back to the thrower. It is a weapon used by indigenous Australians for hunting.

Mitchel River (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Grey-headed Flying Fox
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

After seeing the museum, we passed through the beautiful Mitchel River side road. White clouds looked like a splash of water in the blue sky. We saw a colony of Grey-headed Flying Foxes hanging from a tree.

Around 6:15PM, we returned to Hotel Urban Central. Our journey with Martin and Janine ended here. I thanked both of them for their wonderful presentation, efforts and patience.

After freshening up, Geetanjali, Jayati and I walked up to Flinders St and Elizabeth Station and saw St Paul's Cathedral. Our target was to explore Docklands and to visit the Giant Wheel by tram. We reached Docklands where all the high-rise buildings were lit, making the night scene very beautiful. The dock was shining with garlands of light. The reflections of light in the water were amazing.

Bolte Bridge view from the Docklands (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Melbourne Docklands (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Bolte Bridge from the Melbourne Docklands looked beautiful. The Melbourne Star Observation Giant Wheel was illuminated with lights of different colours.

Sandridge Bridge over Yarra River with symbolic art works and metal sculptures caught our eye. Roads and buildings were decorated to welcome Christmas in advance. It was all so beautiful.

Sandridge Bridge on Yarra River (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Buildings decorated for Christmas (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

We came back by the free tram near Southbank. The Crown was full of life. Everybody seemed to be enjoying themselves outside the Crown. Unexpectedly, we saw a fire show at the Crown which was amazing and took us by surprise. Both the towers of the Crown were spouting fire high into the sky making an otherwise cold night atmosphere hotter. Then we started moving back and got to Urban Central around 11:30PM.

November 24, 2019: Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne

On our last day, we had only three hours to go around, as we were scheduled to leave Australia in the afternoon. Jayati and I decided to use those three hours by checking out the Royal Botanic Garden, Melbourne. We took a short cut and saw a little tower that resembles the Eiffel Tower.

We reached Alexandra Gardens, and Queen Victoria Gardens was on the opposite side of the road where we saw the statue of Queen Victoria. The Myer Music Bowl (MMW) was all set for music. We visited the King's Domain where the King's Pillar stood tall. The Seeds of Friendship – the statue of Australian Turkish Friendship Memorial – was noteworthy.

Garden House (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Angel sculpture beside Yarra River, made with hand-painted ceramic tiles (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Gallipoli Memorial Garden is made to commemorate the service and sacrifice of the Australian and New Zealand Army in the Gallipoli campaign. Lone Pine was the name given to a solitary tree on the Gallipoli Peninsula in Turkey, which marked the site of the Battle of Lone Pine in 1915 during World War One. It was the sole survivor of a group of trees that had been cut down by Turkish soldiers who had used the timber and branches to cover their trenches. Lone Pine seeds have been planted throughout Australia and have come to symbolize the courage and sacrifice of Australians in the Gallipoli Campaign.

Australian Wood Duck family
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Tea Tree (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Restio (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Finally, we reached the Royal Botanic Garden. The lakes, lawns and garden beds there are home to thousands of different plants from around the world and provide a convenient habitat for local birds and animals. We went through the Oak Collection section, and saw many different types of oak from all around the world. Different flowers bloomed with their varied colours in the Gardens House section.

By now, we didn't have much time left and so we returned to the hotel to check out. We took a shuttle to Melbourne Airport for our flight back to India, scheduled at 03:10PM. We reached Hyderabad airport around midnight on November 25, 2019, via Malaysia Airlines through Kuala Lumpur.

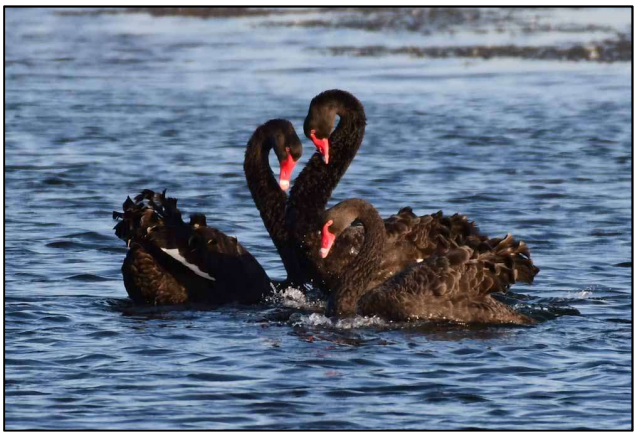
I learnt a lot throughout our Australian tour and enjoyed each and every moment. I must thank the Australian people for all their help during our travel, especially the day we explored the Blue Mountains. I was very sorry to hear from Janine about the bush fire that engulfed Buchan where we sat at the little stream and enjoyed birding on November 21, 2019. I would like to thank Janine and Martin for showing us and explaining everything to us so patiently. A special thanks to Shafaat Sir and Vikram for arranging the tour so smoothly, and to all the team members for making the trip such a memorable one!

The group at Australia (Photo courtesy: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

***

Some other bird photos taken during the trip:

Australian Pied Oystercatcher (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)



Black Swan courtship (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Black Swan with young (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Australian Pelican (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Silver Gull (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Common Bronzewing (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Chestnut Teal (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Shining Bronze Cuckoo (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rainbow Lorikeet (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Magpie-lark (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Crested Pigeon (Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Great Egret (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Common Bronzewing (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

White-winged Chough (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Black-fronted Dotterel (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

White-faced Heron (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Noisy Miner
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Kookaburra
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

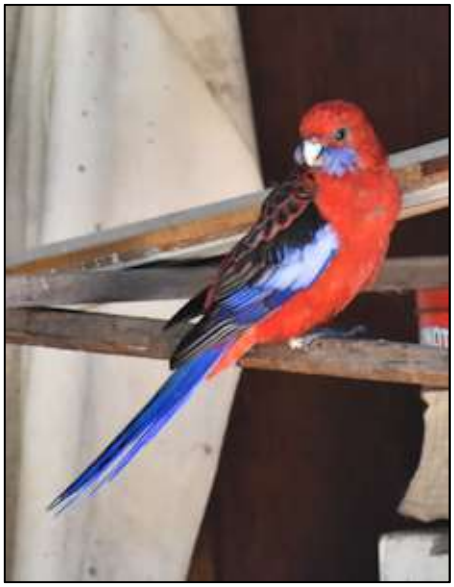
Superb Fairywren
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Rainbow Lorikeet
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Red Wattlebird
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)

Cape Barren Goose
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
(Photo: Wg Cdr Yella Prakash Rao)



Crimson Rosella
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Long-billed Corella
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Superb Fairywren
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Australian Magpie
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Pied Cormorant
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Some other fauna photos taken during the trip:

Eastern Grey Kangaroo
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Goanna/Lace Monitor
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Swamp Wallaby
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Other flora photographed during the trip:

Alpine (aka Prostrate) Tea Tree
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Common (aka Wedge-leaved) Dampiera
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Red Hot Poker (aka Torch Lily)
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Coast Banksia (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Black Paperbark (aka Western Black Tea Tree)
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

White Lily (Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

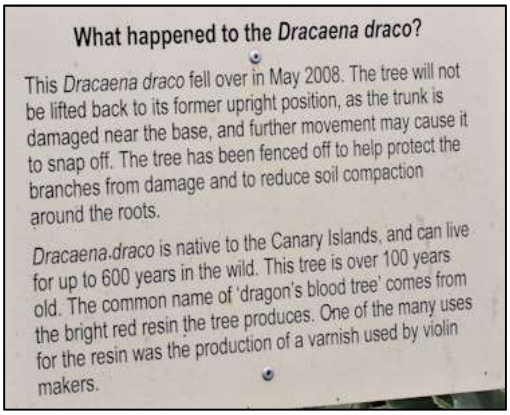
Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Purple Water Lily (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Queensland Tree Waratah (aka Red Silky Oak)
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Queensland Tree Waratah (aka Red Silky Oak)
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Dracaena Draco (aka Canary Islands Dragon Tree)
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)



What happened to the *Dracaena draco*?

This *Dracaena draco* fell over in May 2008. The tree will not be lifted back to its former upright position, as the trunk is damaged near the base, and further movement may cause it to snap off. The tree has been fenced off to help protect the branches from damage and to reduce soil compaction around the roots.

Dracaena draco is native to the Canary Islands, and can live for up to 600 years in the wild. This tree is over 100 years old. The common name of 'dragon's blood tree' comes from the bright red resin the tree produces. One of the many uses for the resin was the production of a varnish used by violin makers.

Dracaena Draco information plaque
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Eucalyptus (aka Gum Tree) (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Tea Tree (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rose sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rose sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rose sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rose sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rose sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Rhododendron sp (Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Orchid Cactus
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Gum Tree
(Photo: Dr G Samuel Sukumar)

Tasman Flax-lily fruit
(Photo: Dr Barnali Chaudhuri)

Complete list of bird/mammal/reptile sightings during the trip:

	MAMMALS				
1	Short-beaked Echidna	5	Red-necked Wallaby	8	Australian Fur-seal
2	Common Wombat	6	Swamp (Black) Wallaby	9	Burunnan Dolphin
3	Common Brushtail Possum	7	Grey Headed Flying Fox	10	European Hare
4	Eastern Grey Kangaroo				

	REPTILES				
1	Eastern Long-necked Turtle	4	Shingleback	7	Goanna/Lace Monitor
2	Yellow-bellied Water Skink	5	Eastern Water Dragon	8	Eastern Brown Snake
3	Common/Eastern Blue-tongued Skink	6	Gippsland Water Dragon		

	BIRDS				
1	Emu	35	Glossy Ibis	69	Fairy Tern
2	Magpie Goose	36	Royal Spoonbill	70	Caspian Tern
3	Cape Barren Goose	37	Yellow-billed Spoonbill	71	Whiskered Tern
4	Black Swan	38	Black-shouldered Kite	72	White-winged Black Tern
5	Australian Shelduck	39	Black Kite	73	Common Tern
6	Australian Wood Duck	40	Whistling Kite	74	Crested Tern
7	Pacific Black Duck	41	White-bellied Sea Eagle	75	Common Bronzewing
8	Australasian Shoveler	42	Swamp Harrier	76	Brush Bronzewing
9	Grey Teal	43	Spotted Harrier	77	Crested Pigeon
10	Chestnut Teal	44	Brown Goshawk	78	Wonga Pigeon
11	Pink-eared Duck	45	Wedge-tailed Eagle	79	Pallid Cuckoo
12	Hardhead	46	Australian Spotted Crake	80	Brush Cuckoo
13	Blue-billed Duck	47	Purple Swamphen	81	Fan-tailed Cuckoo
14	Musk Duck	48	Dusky Moorhen	82	Shining Bronze Cuckoo
15	Australasian Grebe	49	Black-tailed Native-hen	83	Australian Koel
16	Hoary-headed Grebe	50	Eurasian Coot	84	Tawny Frogmouth
17	Great Crested Grebe	51	Masked Lapwing	85	Azure Kingfisher
18	Short-tailed Shearwater	52	Red-capped Plover	86	Laughing Kookaburra
19	Australasian Gannet	53	Hooded Plover	87	Sacred Kingfisher
20	Little Black Cormorant	54	Black-fronted Dotterel	88	Nankeen Kestrel
21	Great Cormorant	55	Red-kneed Dotterel	89	Brown Falcon
22	Pied Cormorant	56	Australian Pied Oystercatcher	90	Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo
23	Little Pied Cormorant	57	Sooty Oystercatcher	91	Gang-gang Cockatoo
24	Black-faced Cormorant	58	Black-winged Stilt	92	Galah
25	Australasian Darter	59	Red-necked Avocet	93	Little Corella
26	Australian Pelican	60	Bar-tailed Godwit	94	Long-billed Corella
27	White-necked Heron	61	Common Greenshank	95	Sulphur-crested Cockatoo
28	Great Egret	62	Marsh Sandpiper	96	Rainbow Lorikeet
29	White-faced Heron	63	Red-necked Stint	97	Musk Lorikeet
30	Little Egret	64	Sharp-tailed Sandpiper	98	Purple-crowned Lorikeet
31	Cattle Egret	65	Curlew Sandpiper	99	Crimson Rosella
32	Nankeen Night Heron	66	Silver Gull	100	Eastern Rosella
33	Australian White Ibis	67	Pacific Gull	101	Red-rumped Parrot
34	Straw-necked Ibis	68	Little Tern	102	Australian King Parrot

	BIRDS				
103	Superb Lyrebird	132	Weebill	161	White-winged Chough
104	Satin Bowerbird	133	Brown Gerygone	162	Jacky Winter
105	White-throated Treecreeper	134	Eastern Whipbird	163	Scarlet Robin
106	Superb Fairywren	135	Spotted Quail-thrush	164	Rose Robin
107	Southern Emu-wren	136	Masked Woodswallow	165	Eastern Yellow Robin
108	Eastern Spinebill	137	White-browed Woodswallow	166	Welcome Swallow
109	Lewin's Honeyeater	138	Dusky Woodswallow	167	Fairy Martin
110	Yellow-faced Honeyeater	139	Grey Butcherbird	168	Tree Martin
111	Singing Honeyeater	140	Australian Magpie	169	Australian Reed Warbler
112	White-eared Honeyeater	141	Pied Currawong	170	Little Grassbird
113	White-plumed Honeyeater	142	Black-faced Cuckoo-shrike	171	Brown Songlark
114	Bell Miner	143	White-bellied Cuckoo-shrike	172	Rufous Songlark
115	Noisy Miner	144	White-winged Triller	173	Golden-headed Cisticola
116	Red Wattlebird	145	Cicadabird	174	Silvereye
117	Little Wattlebird	146	Crested Shrike-tit	175	Mistletoebird
118	White-fronted Chat	147	Grey Shrike-thrush	176	Australasian Pipit
119	Crescent Honeyeater	148	Golden Whistler	177	Zebra Finch
120	New Holland Honeyeater	149	Rufous Whistler	178	Eurasian Skylark
121	White-naped Honeyeater	150	Olive-backed Oriole	179	House Sparrow
122	Brown-headed Honeyeater	151	Willie Wagtail	180	Common Starling
123	Spotted Pardalote	152	Grey Fantail	181	Common Myna
124	Striated Pardalote	153	Rufous Fantail	182	Common Blackbird
125	Pilotbird	154	Black-faced Monarch	183	Rock Dove / Feral Pigeon
126	White-browed Scrubwren	155	Magpie-lark	184	Spotted Dove
127	Large-billed Scrubwren	156	Leaden Flycatcher	185	European Goldfinch
128	Striated Fieldwren	157	Restless Flycatcher	186	Long-toed Stint
129	Brown Thornbill	158	Australian Raven	187	Little Penguin
130	Yellow-rumped Thornbill	159	Little Raven		
131	Striated Thornbill	160	Forest Raven		

* * *